

Big mistake!

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

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Ocean didn't exactly lose out in the bid to transform the dimension-blending Last Action Hero movie into a game. Post-Sony-buy-out Psygnosis had Arnie's self-parodying movie-in-a-movie about the movies in the bag from the outset, what with Columbia Pictures - the studio behind the production - being a division of the PlayStation people's empire. This also explains how they managed to secure the license to create a Bram Stoker's Dracula game for the Amiga when Psygnosis were far from renowned for their licensed titles.



Last Action Hero's plot is almost an irrelevance; it's a tongue-in-cheek, cheesy satire of the action-cop genre that takes great pleasure in shining a spotlight on its hackneyed tropes as if by way of an extended confession. It stands on a soapbox hollering through a director's megaphone, "Look how lazy, stupid and patronising we've been all these years. But wait, get this, the biggest offender of all is admitting it and mocking himself, so it's hilarious".



While it certainly has its moments (check out the acrobatic troop of pyramid-forming rottweilers!), you really need to be of the right age to appreciate most of the humour - it's all a bit pre-teen... naturally, because that was the target audience. Arnie (aged 46 at this point) who had previously segued into lightweight comedy with *Twins* (1988) and *Kindergarten Cop* (1991), was aiming to continue the trend by focusing on more family-friendly fare. *Last Action Hero* was the test-bed for his new direction.



Joining the parody set-pieces is only-child teenager, Danny Madigan, who attempts to blot out the misery of losing his father by losing *himself* in the movies. Specifically, he has a penchant for those starring Arnold Schwarzenegger as LA cop, Jack Slater, an all-American, no-holds-barred, one-man crime-fighting army. These are imaginatively titled Jack Slater I, Jack Slater II, Jack Slater III... and so on. Don't worry, stick with it and you'll soon get a handle on how the naming convention works.



Danny spends so much time at the cinema he's on first name terms with Nick, the projectionist (and now mentor) played by Robert Prosky (you know, grandpa Munster).



Nick: This is a wonderful moment for me, Mr Slater. I've never met a fictional character before. How new and exciting this must all be for you. Jack Slater: Hey, I just found out I'm imaginary. I mean, how would you feel if somebody made you up? Your job, your marriage, your kids. Oh, yeah. Let's push his son off the building. Gives you nightmares for the rest of your life. But you're fictional, so who cares? I'm sorry. But I don't find this new and exciting to discover that my whole life has been a damn movie. Nick: There are lots of things worse than movies: politicians, wars, forest fires, famine, plague, sickness, pain, warts, politicians... Jack Slater: You

already mentioned them. Nick: I know I did. They're twice as bad as anything else.



One day Nick decides the time is right to trust Danny with a magical golden ticket given to him by Harry Houdini that allows the bearer to cross the boundary between reality and the fictional movie world in which Jack believes he leads a life determined by free will. Before anyone has time to consult the 'top ten list of really silly ideas likely to end in disaster', Danny is transported through the cinema screen and into the back of Jack's speeding Pontiac Bonneville.



Having shaken off his pursuers, Jack escorts Danny to the LAPD HQ where we encounter a stereotypical blood-vessel-bursting shouty manic police chief. Why are they always black? Hang on, shouldn't the *cops* be the ones doing the chasing? Well, whatever. We'll have to get used to things not making much sense.



When Lieutenant Chief Dekker surfaces to draw breath he promotes Danny from daydreaming school kid to Jack's partner. Not as ridiculous a decision as you might immediately imagine seeing as the feline version of Roger

Rabbit is already on the staff payroll. While Danny plugs away in vain attempting to convince Jack he's living in the realms of fantasy, he's assigned his first detective case - to investigate the dodgy dealings of Mafia boss, Tony Vivaldi.



Danny Madigan: Wait! I can prove this is a movie!
Dekker: Who the hell are you, kid? Danny Madigan: Look out there, there's a cartoon cat.
Jack Slater: He's supposed to be back on duty. He was only suspended for a month. Now shut up. Danny Madigan: Listen to what I'm saying. An animated cat just walked into the squad room. Hello.



Jack Slater: He'll do it again tomorrow. So what's your point? Dekker: That cat is one the best men I got. Jack Slater: Yeah. Dekker: Now who is this twerp? And why is that smile on his face? Danny Madigan: I just love the way you two fight knowing how you really feel about each other. Dekker: Pray tell, just tell me how I feel about this weird-looking sack of puppy poo.



Visiting his mansion to ask him politely to stop being naughty we're introduced to his loyal, head henchgoon, Benedict, who is soon to become the main thorn in Jack's side. Danny makes the schoolboy error of revealing to Benedict how clued up on the subject of Vivaldi's criminal misdemeanours he is. Low and behold he smells a rat, so stalks Jack back to his home to get to the bottom of it... not the rat, the *truth* I mean. That would be weird, and potentially infectious. Jack, his daughter Whitney, and Danny are able to deflect the assault, though not without losing the magic golden ticket stub to Benedict.



I need your clothes, boots, and a Big Mac and fries. This is the drive-through, isn't it?

Danny Madigan: The house looked European, like maybe if you get a postcard from Italy or something. Like that one. In fact, just like that one! The bad guys are in there!

Jack Slater: You know something? I think you should be wearing this. Danny Madigan: I don't think I've earned it yet. Jack Slater: You don't understand. You just solved the entire case. you just revolutionised the entire history of police training. I mean all these years at the academy, studying human character, psyche of the terrorists, fingerprint analysis, all the courses that I've taken in surveillance, hostage negotiation, and criminal psychology, when all I have to do is drive around the neighbourhood, point my finger at a house, and say, "the bad guys are in there!"? Danny Madigan: You think you're funny, don't you? Jack Slater: I know I am. I'm the famous comedian, Arnold Braunschweiger. Danny Madigan: Schwarzenegger! Jack Slater: Gesundheit.

Once Benedict becomes cognisant of the ticket's transcendental power, his brain-cogs begin grinding out a nefarious plan to subjugate the real world. At the premiere of Arnie's latest Jack Slater flick Benedict intends to assassinate the *genuine* Schwarzenegger who will be watching amongst the audience. This the one-eyed-wonder surmises will give him free rein to chaperone a boundless cavalry of movie monsters, serial killers, and so on, beyond their celluloid existence and into the real world to wreak havoc, all to the tune of pipe-piper, Benedict.



*Man who keep target on eye, always have eye on target. -
old Chinese proverb (from er... some book or other)*

Benedict: Gentlemen. Since you are about to die anyway, I may as well tell you the entire plot. Think of villains, Jack. You want Dracula? Dra-cool-la? Hang on. (takes out the ticket) Benedict: I'll fetch him. Dracula? Huh. I can get King Kong! We'll have a nightmare with Freddy Krueger, have a surprise party for Adolf Hitler, Hannibal Lecter can do the catering, and then we'll have a christening for Rosemary's Baby! All I have to do is snap my fingers and they'll be here. They're lining up to get here, and do you know why Jack? Should I tell you why? Hmm? Because here, in this world, the bad guys can win!



When iris eyes are smiling...

Hardly the shock of the century, all this raises one or two minor objections for Danny and Jack who make it their mission to sabotage the despicable scheme, rescuing Arnie in the process (*both* of them). Silver screen Arnie saves the day (and therefore also the future of humankind), though not without sustaining a critical injury. To survive he must return to the land of invulnerable mega-cops where bodily punctures considered terminal in *our* world are no more than insta-heal flesh wounds in *his*.

Much to Psygnosis' chagrin, Columbia were especially closely engaged with the development process of the Last Action Hero licensed tie-in game, and so you'd imagine this might translate into the delivery of an accurate, cinematic interpretation. No secret was made of this imposition in the magazine preview articles leading up to the title's release, leading us to assume relations between the two parties weren't as amicable as you might hope.

In fact, there were *seven* licensed Last Action Hero games in total released in 1993/94 - Psygnosis were only 'in charge' of *two* of them. The remainder - for the Game Boy, Game Gear, NES, SEGA Mega Drive and SNES - were published directly by Sony, and developed either by Teeny Weeny Games or Bits Studios. Some comprise platforming as well as driving stages, others just platforming.



In the SNES edition, one sub-game allows you to call a truce with Benedict for a quick game of Pang. Honest gov'nor.

Looking on the bright side, Columbia's keen involvement resulted in Psygnosis being granted access to the movie's script, as well as stills taken during filming. As the movie neared completion the developers were also invited to see an early rough cut, which must have helped immensely in establishing a feel for the style, and story, they were aiming to reflect. This was far more cooperation than some game developers were treated to by the copyright holders of the movie they had been tasked with translating to the small bedroom screen.



We also know from the outpouring of ranty YouTube footage and scathing reviews of the calamity that emerged from Dr Frankenstein's Liverpool lab that *too* much involvement from the movie studios can be equally as detrimental as not *enough*. Alienate a team by tying their hands behind their backs and ask them to crank out a premium product, and well, you can *guess* the rest.



One is not amused.

Without knowing the history, it looks like at some point between Last Action Hero's inception in July 1993 and its long-overdue release date, someone made a bet with Psygnosis that they couldn't create the lowest rating game in the Amiga Hall of Shame. According to DOS programmer, Ste Cork, self-sabotage wasn't that far from the truth. They had a commendable stab at it, but no cigar I'm afraid. That honour likely goes to Domark's International Rugby Challenge - Amiga Power awarded it 2%, Amiga Format, 16%, and Amiga Force, 19%.



"Columbia Pictures said that we weren't allowed to shoot at the bad guys or armoured truck in the game, even though Arnold does exactly that in the movie. This was a the time when he was starting to make the comedy pictures like Junior/Twins/Kindergarten Cop, and therefore we were told to turn the violence right down. We were only allowed to have the car bump into the truck over and over to damage it. I found this restriction to be annoying and stupid, and as a riposte, I made the pedestrians capable of being run over by all the in-game vehicles, including the computer-controlled ones, the bad guys and your own. Pedestrians even leave little blood splats when run over, and do not wait for cars before

using the pedestrian crossings (which cars ignore), ensuring they get splatted regularly. Columbia never said anything and the feature remained.



As a further 'up yours' to Columbia I created a semi-hidden area in the middle of the map, where the player can squeeze between two bushes, drive around the back of a house that's not visible from any other part of the road, and see a swastika-shaped swimming pool, on the basis that there was a Nazi war criminal living there. Unfortunately, the Psygnosis producer who saw it (and thought it was hilarious) insisted the pool be changed to a simple rectangle. The hidden area is still there, but there's nothing exciting to see.

Every platform version of this game was different to all the others. There was no central coordination or direction, the box art for several versions (including PC) were from an early Commodore Amiga demo and thus

pointless, and the project was a 'short straw' - meaning no-one wanted to do it, hence why many versions don't even have authors names on them. Psygnosis even shipped the Amiga manual with the PC version, and just added a single-sheet loose insert for PC controls. No-one cared about this game, and it showed."



If in doubt plead insanity.

With 'action' and 'hero' in the title and Mr Schwarzenegger on the box, it stands to reason that Psygnosis would hammer out a 'one man versus the world' beat 'em up. It appears they were aiming to bring Streets of Rage to the Amiga and PC, missing the mark by a country mile. What eventually washed up looks like dilapidated shipwreck cargo you'd happily leave to the seagulls, rather than a homage to the Mega Drive's flagship brawler.



Playing as Arnie, Arnie or Arnie - it's your choice entirely - you come fully equipped with two not so lethal weapons; your feet and fists. Thanks to Columbia's meddling, the Psygnosis team (on the Amiga side comprising coder, Paul Carpenter, graphician, Roy Stewart, and musician, Mike Clarke) weren't permitted to kit out our protagonist with weapons, or convey any gory violence.



Curiously the same wasn't true for the toy line produced by Mattel whose action figures came complete with hand holes in which to insert weapons, as well as the guns, axe and so on themselves.

In the game it seems that only the *baddies* got a pass - *they're* allowed to wield knives, guns, a not-so-concealed sleeve spike, nun-chucks and so on, while Arnie the American cop - defender of life, liberty and justice - has to take his chances pointing an unloaded finger and mouthing bang-bang noises. If the take-home lesson is that only scumbags carry weapons, I don't know what happened with the toys. That's Hollywood execs for you.

While based on an Arnie movie, this isn't one of his usual effing and jeffing, 18-rated, blood-splattered maim-fests. Last Action Hero is a PG-13 affair featuring comic-book style violence and explosions, and minimal naughty wordage.



According to the dubious press statements issued at the time, it was intended to be a conduit for an anti-violence missive. One that concludes when Arnie blasts his suave, suited nemesis, Benedict, in his explosive glass eye with one of those bangy-shooty devices I believe are known as 'guns'.

Prior to this, Arnie's other main foe, the Ripper, hurls his son off the roof of the Lincoln Elementary School to his death.



The mac-wearing, manky-toothed fugly is later electrified to prevent him from doing the same to Danny.



Happy-chappy isn't he, all things considered.

Other characters brandish knives and automatic weapons, while a sub-plot involves poisoning a rival gang at a funeral by planting toxic gas inside the body of the deceased. When the subterfuge goes south, Benedict kills Vivaldi (his now ex-boss) to escalate his own malevolent machinations. Yes, Columbia's suddenly moralistic stance is all a bit muddled to say the least.

Tony Vivaldi: What is this, Benedict? First you're my friend; now you turn a... 360 on me! Benedict: 180, you stupid, spaghetti-slurping cretin - 180! If I did a 360, I'd go completely around and end up back where I started! Tony Vivaldi: What? Benedict: Trust me! (shoots him)

Game producer Tony Parkes' solution to complying with Columbia's erratic stipulations was to make Last Action Hero as light-hearted as possible, rather like a Tom and Jerry

animation he postulated by way of an example. Hardly a surprise then that what transpired from team Psyggy would be in no danger of shunting the likes of the ultra-gruesome Narc into the shade.

Apportioning blame towards Psygnosis - as popular a sport as it has become - is a bit unfair for a *number* of reasons. Whilst development of Last Action Hero was outsourced to The Dome, as discussed they were clearly shot in the foot by the movie's overbearing production studio. As for Psygnosis, *they* were hamstrung by the Sony takeover and the installation of incompetent management who knew zilch about gaming, yet still insisted on calling the shots.

It's often said that the development of less important games would be shunted along to third parties, rather than being dealt with in-house, though it wasn't a foregone conclusion that The Dome would screw it up. They certainly *did* produce some above-average games, although mostly not with the same people involved. There was Bob's Bad Day, Bump 'n' Burn, PGA European Tour, and Puggsy.



Weaponry wasn't to be the only way in which Psygnosis' plans were diluted between the preview and final stages of the game's production. Originally there were to be *three* playable characters - Arnie aka Jack Slater, Jack's daughter, Whitney, and Whiskers, a cartoon cat detective voiced by Danny Devito in the movie.



Even Jack's young sidekick, Danny Madigan, isn't an option because Columbia deemed it inappropriate, despite him being Arnie's co-star!



Instead Danny and Whitney appear as animated backdrop sprites to be rescued within the 'house brawls' level.

Character Information

Name: Whitney & Danny

Sex: Female & Male

Role: Jack Slaters daughter, and expert at karate
Whitney can handle herself well.
Danny, teleported from the real world, is
helpless and needs you as Jack Slater to
help and protect him.





Whiskers is nowhere to be seen - even Danny Devito refused to be associated with the malignant puddy tat, opting for his stint to go uncredited.

Such drastic changes can't have been due to a lack of time because the game wasn't finished until June 1994, missing the Christmas ETA by six months. By this stage the movie had been doing the rounds for twelve months in the States and eleven in the UK, so the hype-train had well and truly left the station.

Reading between the lines it seems that Columbia Pictures wanted Arnie up front and centre at all times; sharing the limelight simply wasn't going to be acceptable. In effect the multiplayer option was dropped, and subsequently the chances of the game's success slashed. Its co-op potential is the heart and soul of *any* leading beat 'em up. / know that, *you* know that. Columbia were clueless.

Even with Arnie now the sole focus, his minders weren't to be placated so easily. Next they took issue with the way artist, David Bland, had chosen to represent their client, arguing that he looks *too* beefy! Arnold Schwarzenegger that is; former professional bodybuilder, Mr. Universe and seven-time winner of the Mr. Olympia contest.

"Arnold Schwarzenegger (or more likely his agent/publicist) rejected the Arnold-graphics for the beat-em-up part of the game twice as being 'too muscley' - again, it was due to the actor's attempt to switch over to making comedy movies at the time."



Sprite modified and presumably approved, it appears that no objections were made to Arnie lolloping about the screen looking like a Moonwalking Mr Soft (the Trebor Softmints mascot). Maybe they considered him adopting a comedy walk to rival Basil Fawlty's to be par for the course, given the new direction his career was to take. He went on to star in *Junior* (1994), *Jingle All the Way* (1996), *unintentional* comedy, *Batman & Robin* (1997), and *Around the World in 80 Days* (2004). Ironically, between comedies Arnie continued to appear in swearsy thrillers, bullets and

bombs action movies, and sci-fi sequels, proving that he's sufficiently engaging and adaptable enough to dabble with different genres without having to pigeon-hole himself.

Arnie approached hard/blues rock band AC/DC to personally request that they compose a title track for the movie. 'Big Gun' was their answer. Complimentary songs by Alice in Chains, Megadeth, Queensryche and Michael Kamen, Def Leppard, Anthrax, Aerosmith, Alice in Chains, Cypress Hill, Fishbone, Tesla and Buckethead constitute the remainder of the OST. Presumably then Arnie would also have approved of the Amiga game's audio accompaniment. In the movie Arnie is astonished to discover that other types of music besides rock exist because that's all he ever experiences in his action flick realm. Hopefully in allusion to this, the game follows suit - the music comprises electric guitar-based rock music (and simultaneous sound effects), which is a welcome and unexpected touch of attention-to-detail. As is the reference to 'Pandora' in the title graphic. This is the name of the theatre Danny visits when he should be at school. These interior scenes were filmed at the Orpheum Theatre in California.



Initially the SEGA Mega-CD was to be the lead platform, allowing for the inclusion of extended FMV clips. Ultimately these plans fell by the wayside and only a DOS and Amiga edition materialised. A CD-ROM release for the PC would have been feasible, incorporating the same technology, however, the decision was taken to make it solely a floppy-based game. Last Action Hero was released on six 1.44mb PC disks and includes some very brief, badly digitised clips from the movie. Compatible only with standard OCS/ECS systems, the Amiga title was delivered on just two, lower capacity disks. No FMV could be included, and an equivalent to the DOS version's GTA style sections is absent. There was never any intention to spin off a separate CD32 incarnation because Psygnosis weren't convinced by the console's adoption rates. Owners of Commodore's other AGA machines had a lucky escape too.

A limited range of enemy types attempt to thwart our progress, and all are cloned multiple times, making it seem like a stooge production line. Save for the Ripper and

Benedict these don't appear to be specific replications of anything seen in the movie. In fact, one looks like Freddy Mercury during his Village People phase, and bear-hugging Bolo the wrestler is apparently Last Action Hero's answer to Abobo from Double Dragon.



Many, many seconds of one man's life were devoted to creating this backdrop. Never forget his sacrifice.

Another character would pass for a cross between a fireman and the Ripper's protege. Holding aloft an axe sturdy enough to break through a reinforced steel barricade, he squelches around the scenery wearing wellies and waders held up with braces. In tribute he goes as far as losing all his hair to mimic the grandmaster of delirious terror himself.



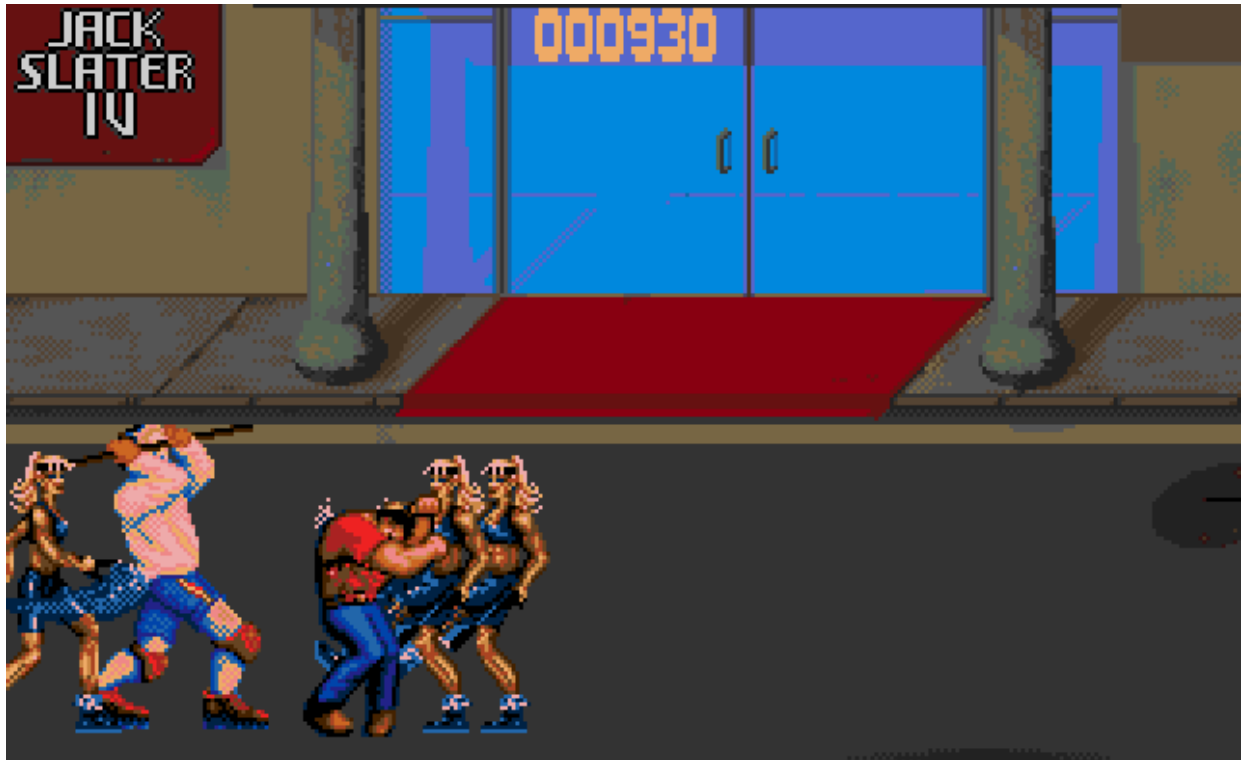
In the DOS edition you'll even find a boss called 'Bobjob'. Guess which bowler-hat-chucking Bond villain *he's* a parody of? Actually this guy would have been based on Vivaldi's doorman who has a few brief scenes in the movie and looks a lot like Harold Sakata. It's *not* him since he died in 1982.



Slater: Could I speak to the drug dealer of the house, please? Doorman: I beg your pardon? Slater: It's a beautiful day, and we're out killing drug dealers. Are there any in the house?



Back on the Amiga, the remaining guardians are generic adversaries dreamt up by The Dome's team. There's 'Hockey', who shockingly enough is a hockey player who fights in the full sporting regalia using his stick as a hitty tool. Sshhh, nobody say 'weapon' please, or a fairy might die somewhere in Neverland.



Another end of level assailant is Jet, the leader of the 'Skins' gang (who?). This svelte gymnast can fly-kick the length of the screen, wears an air-tight rubber catsuit, and enjoys nothing more than perching on a wall in the background of her car park play-pit to spectate as her lackeys take care of the dirty work.



Certain evil-doers dwarf Arnie much like the warped-scale furniture seen in Vivaldi's mansion. This turns out to be more of a hindrance than an advantage because it makes it easier for you to duck beneath their reach, where you're free to pummel them into submission at your leisure. Others are supported by ordinary goons to ramp up the challenge. Which isn't to say it really achieves this end. You can complete the game simply by holding down the rapid-fire enabled joystick button, letting the baddies walk into your fists, effectively committing suicide.



Arnie's punch is much faster and more potent than his kick, so you tend to fall into the lazy habit of only deploying this optimal attack technique throughout. Some beat 'em ups prevent this by rendering you incapable of performing the same move more than a couple of times in succession, forcing you to be creative. Not Last Action Hero.

A shame actually because you *do* have quite a comprehensive range of moves at your disposal. You can kick and punch obviously, though other options include an uppercut, grab-head-and-introduce-to-knee trick (although this is an automated step following a series of punches), head-butt, roundhouse, and a 360 spin similar to the one seen in Shadow Warriors. This is very effective, yet comes with a payoff; executing the manoeuvre depletes your energy. An idea that seems to have been borrowed from Final Fight.

Nobody expects a hulk like Arnie to move with the agility of a ballerina. A few clips faster than a sloth, however, would have been nice. As it is everyone around him flounders about

the screen three times faster than Arnie, making him look like a lethargic geriatric who should be taking better care of his aching joints, and enjoying his retirement.

Burgers and Coke are on hand to boost Arnie's energy meter if he can summon the strength to break open their crates to retrieve them, and golden tickets grant him an extra life. Do we *really* want to prolong the misery?



AI isn't exactly Last Action Hero's forte. Threatening the Invisible Man on the other hand...

Very odd for a beat 'em up, you're unable to jump, no doubt thanks to the usual one-button joystick issue and the wide range of combat moves on offer. Also, being able to move within a horizontal as well as vertical plane like Renegade or Double Dragon means pushing up is already assigned to moving in that direction. On the contrary, in the DOS game worked on by a different three-man team, Arnie travels along

a linear horizontal plane, freeing the joystick's up position for jumping.

Benedict - as in the movie - has an endless supply of novelty glass eyes to be used as detonative projectiles. Also cribbed from the silver screen is his comically extended handgun. It's silencer is so ridiculously long I'd be surprised if it didn't emit *anti*-noise! Benedict has a further trick up his sleeve, literally; a long machete style blade locked in the ready-to-decapitate-you position. I have no idea what that relates to - it would have to be an extremely exaggerated interpretation of his little pocket dagger if that's what the artist was going for.



Facing Benedict for the first time at Jack's house we tip-toe around one another in a fit of fists, bullets, slashing and popping eyeballs... until he spontaneously decides he has to be elsewhere and escapes through the window, without first opening it. In movieland we see him make a sharp exit to his car during the melee, yet it's not clear if he uses the door, a NASA space rocket emblazoned with an advert for Last Action Hero, or a window.



Mirroring the movie, we resume our spat later on the rooftop of a high-rise building, where we're also joined by the Ripper for the final fracas. Defeat them both and an automated re-enactment of the movie's electrocution scene ensues, though with no water involved.







Yeah, it's really not easy to capture any worthwhile shots of the finale that help to explain what's occurin'



Look closely towards the sidelines for a blink-and-you'll-miss-it moment and you'll spot Benedict being punched over the precipice of the building by an unseen Arnie. "No sequel for you!" We'll have to assume the arm and fist belongs to him anyway. Again, this isn't quite what happens in the source material. Arnie shoots Benedict in his dead eye and he's obliterated in the explosion. Of course goody-guns are barred in pixel land, hence the alternative swan song.

In the movie, the Ripper's final retort as he fries is "I'll be back!". Jack dismisses the threat with, "the hell you will!" The same isn't true for the game. Nevertheless, between levels you'll hear a digitised sample of Arnie's cliched catchphrase. This isn't just a random, vaguely relevant Arnieism thrown in for good measure. It's a line trotted out several times in the movie in homage to Terminator.



Danny Madigan: Wait a second. Where you going? Jack Slater: I'll be back! (pause) Jack Slater: Ha! You didn't know I was gonna say that, did you? Danny Madigan: That's what you always say. Jack Slater: I do? (sigh) Danny Madigan: Everyone keeps waiting for you to work it in. It's kind of like your calling card.

In Jack's world The Terminator is Sylvester Stallone's baby, so he's none the wiser that he's become a cardboard cut-out hero who regurgitates cheap, throwaway one-liners at every opportunity.



(after seeing a Terminator 2 poster featuring Sylvester Stallone riding a motorbike armed with a shotgun) Danny Madigan: No. It's not possible! Jack Slater: What's not possible? The man is an artist. It's his best performance ever! Danny Madigan: But... that was you! YOU were in that movie! (a girl close-by hears them) Video Babe: (to Jack) You were in a movie? Jack Slater: Yes. It was called 'The Girl of My Dreams'. It starred you. As a matter of fact, there was this very romantic scene where we had dinner together.

It's dialogue like this that makes it so easy to warm to Last Action Hero despite its numerous flaws. At the time we were all too familiar with Hollywood divas' ego-polishing shenanigans, and the desperate measures taken by their obsequious entourage to protect their fragile celebrity profiles. Precisely why it was so refreshing to see one of the industry's most notable figures taking a self-effacing pot-shot at himself and his mixed-bag career.



Maria Shriver: (to Arnold) And remember, don't plug the restaurants. I just hate it when you plug the restaurants or the gyms. It's so tacky.



Jack meeting Arnie at the Oscars as he waits to receive an award for playing Jack on screen is another novel, fun idea that ties everything neatly back to the movie's cinema-centric premise.

Arnold Schwarzenegger: The studio should let me know when they are planning a stunt. You know, you are the best celebrity look-alike I've ever seen. If you get to Los

Angeles, call my office. We can get you shopping centre openings... Jack Slater: Look, I don't really like you. All right? You've brought me nothing but pain.

Where it runs aground is in the ham-fisted, disjointed way the superfluous and dull sub-plots are bolted together, culminating in an unnecessarily bloated run-time. Director, John McTiernan, puts this down to it being "whipped out unedited, practically assembled right out of the camera. It was in the theatre five or six weeks after I finished shooting."

Universal's manipulative schedule reshuffle that resulted in Jurassic Park being released a week prior to Last Action Hero in June 1993 certainly won't have helped its cause. Regardless, Last Action Hero made \$137.3 million at the box office, so but for the stampede to witness Spielberg's ground-breaking CGI and animatronic people-munchers, it may well have been the summer blockbuster many insiders predicted.



Public popularity and critical opinion often deviate where movies are concerned. Last Action Hero's nomination for six Golden Raspberry Awards emphatically attests to this. Although ultimately it didn't 'win' in any category, the film was in the running for Worst Picture, Worst Actor (Arnold

Schwarzenegger), Worst Director, Worst Screenplay, Worst New Star (Austin O'Brien), and Worst Original Song ('Big Gun').

If the games industry had an equivalent means of recognising dire *playable* movies, I'm not so sure The Dome would have left the ceremony unrewarded. Still, it's not the end of the world, if life deals you raspberries, make a Raspberry Pi... and use it to hack the heck out of the negative press. History's what you make of it!